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Science Under Carter: A Year-End Review

A year-end examination of the impact of Carter on science must necessarily confine itself to matters of nuance and tone and signals for the future.

For the fact is that, now nearly a year in office, the President and his senior associates have done relatively little about research and development. The R&D enterprise that they inherited had indeed taken a severe financial and political battering throughout the Nixon years , but Gerald Ford's caretaker Administration had initiated a healing process that was well underway when Mr. Carter entered the White House, And if any theme in this area is apparent over the past year, it is that the Carter Administration is carrying on with that process.

In comparison to the activist churnings that the Administration has initiated on such matters as energy, tax reform, welfare, and human rights, it might appear that R&D is being overlooked, perhaps neglected. But, in reality, it is being pretty much left to itself, not out of indifference, but simply because the Administration doesn't believe that it requires any serious shaking up or redirecting. A common view in the upper echelons is that it had enough of that in recent years, and that what's now required is a long period of stability accompanied by minor tuneups here and there, plus some additional financial support.

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Clues reflecting this thinking came early in the Administration when two Ford holdovers, Donald Fredrickson and Richard Atkinson, were retained by Carter as directors of the principal agencies for the support of academic science, the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation, respectively.

In regard to Fredrickson, HEW Secretary Joseph Califano went to the NIH Bethesda, Md., campus to proclaim that the decision signified the Administration's intention to "depoliticize" medical research (SGR Vol. VII, No. 3). Just what that means, and how far it extends throughout the federal research service, is a foggy matter, since Califano peremptorily bounced out the director of the Center for Disease Control at just about the same time.

The CDC episode might have been regarded as a swine-flu induced aberration by those hoping for a consistent decoupling of science and politics. But the Administration has also demonstrated that it can pick and choose on the sensitive issue of change-of-administration appointments for the research agencies. NIH and NSF were held to be above politics. But Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus later decided that he wants his own choice — still unannounced — to head the venerable Geological Survey. And in both the space agency and the old Energy Research and Development Administration the chiefs from the previous Administration were not retained.

Their successors, however, did not come in with mandates for radical alterations. Rather, in the managerial style that characterizes the Carter Administration, they seem to be emphasizing smoothness of performance rather than marked shifts in priorities or in ideological flavor. Steady as she goes — that could be the motto for R&D in the Carter era.

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In Brief

Good news about the artificial kidney business. According to a recent report, "The Hemodialysis Equipment & Services Marketplace," by a market analysis firm, Frost & Sullivan, profitmaking hemodialysis centers — 23 per cent of the nation's 900 — are showing "spectacular" growth in revenue and "outstanding" profit potential. "Not only are the capital requirements minimal," the report says, "but efficient suppliers have profit margins that exceed 20 per cent pre-tax."

Conversation with a federal official:

He: We're having a helluva time with these western ponies and burros. They keep reproducing and the environmentalists won't let us get rid of them.

SGR: Why don't you feed them birth control pills?

He: Do you want to write the environmental impact statement?

For the first time in its 102-year history, the American Chemical Society will soon have women filling its two top elective posts. Anna J. Harrison, of Mt. Holyoke College, became president-elect last year, and assumes the presidency on January 1. Meanwhile, Mary L. Good, of the University of New Orleans, has been elected chairman of the Society's 16-member board of directors. They are the first women to hold either post in the 115,000 member organization.

. . .Kind Words, but How Much Money?

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Looking at the linkage of science and government, the most important development of the year was the decision to retain the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (SGR Vol. VII, No. 13). Abolished by Nixon when it existed in a somewhat different form, OSTP was established by Ford, in collaboration with Congressional friends of science. Then, barely on its feet when Carter took office, OSTP was widely rumored to be destined for extinction as part of Carter's efforts to demonstrate that he could function with a presidential staff leaner than that of his predecessors'. The marauding reorganization squads, however, were persuaded, apparently at the last moment, that OSTP deserved to stay alive. It got a reprieve, though it was accompanied by orders to reduce its staff from 32 to 22 and to shed a number of coordinating and reporting functions that were written into its statutory charter.

That OSTP survives is a bit of a triumph for science, which deems it important to have one of its own on the White House staff as science adviser to the President. Just how important it is in the presidential scheme of things is, however, an uncertain matter.

Frank Press, who heads the office and also serves as science adviser, fills a job that doesn't have a reliable scoreboard. His most visible success to date came last month when Carter, in awarding the National Medal of Science (SGR Vol. VII, No. 20), picked up the most-often-made complaints of the scientific community and said that the federal government would provide some relief. The President noted that funds for new research instruments are in short supply in the universities, as are jobs for young scientists, and he added, somewhat cryptically, that "The number of top-ranked research centers has been falling off in recent years."

But Carter mentioned no sums, and, apart from indicating that help of some sort was on the way, was quite vague. He did say that he had directed the Office of Management and Budget to "boost . . . research and development items much higher" in the budgets of mission-oriented agencies. Nothing, however, was said about NSF and NIH, the agencies that are the financial mainstays of academic science.

In a series of speeches that Press has recently given, he tells, with apparent pride, that OSTP is regularly involved in the process of preparing Presidential Review Memorandums, which are elaborately composed staff

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10 Months to Fill NBS Job

Though managerial efficiency ranks next to godliness in the Carter Administration, the Carter crew is perhaps the most slipshod and chaos-ridden collection to land in Washington in many years. A case in point involves the directorship of the National Bureau of Standards.

The post became vacant in June 1975, when Richard W. Roberts resigned to join the Energy Research and Development Administration. Deputy Director Ernest Ambler, a 20-year veteran of the Bureau, was appointed Acting Director.

The Ford Administration then decided that he was suitable for the top job, and submitted his name for confirmation by the Senate Commerce Committee. With the presidential election not far off, however, the Committee decided to await the outcome, making it clear that this was no reflection on Ambler; rather, the move was intended to reserve the position in case Carter won and wanted to appoint his own choice.

Meanwhile, Inauguration Day came and went and Ambler stayed on as Acting Director. As months went by, inquiries about the job drew the reply that the appointment was under study. Finally, on November 10, nearly 10 months after taking office, Carter announced that he would nominate Ambler for a full-fledged appointment to the directorship.

Why did it take so long? There's no real answer, except that the nomination was in the mill and that it takes a long time for such matters to work their way through the White House.

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. . .Carter's Reorganizers Shy from R&D

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papers, drawing upon a variety of expertise, for ultimate delivery to the President, who, on the basis of this distilled knowledge and wisdom, is then presumably in a position to make sage decisions. The systems sounds superb, conjuring up, as it does, visions of specialized talents making their "inputs" and honing and clarifying each other's contributions, so that, in the end, Carter is provided with all relevant information and analysis that can be assembled on the many complex issues with which he must deal.

The main difficulty, however, is that while the process appears to be sensible, useful, and tidy, the Carter White House, nonetheless, is an administrative shambles. The system is orderly, but the place it serves is not. And though the paper, including OSTP's contributions, flows smoothly, the relationship between the vaunted PRMs, as they are called, and effective operation of the White House is open to question.

Though the Administration's reorganizers are running loose all over Washington, research and development is one area that has been excluded from their attention. Virtually all R&D agencies have undertaken internal reshufflings, but the long-talked-of, and, usually, feared consolidation of separate research agencies does not seem to be in the offing.

This exemption from the reorganization mania is another indication that the Administration is more or less satisfied with the present layout of R&D, though it's not impossible that someone in the White House labyrinth will someday wake up with the idea that it's time to get on quickly with a science reorganization.

At present, however, R&D is being studied, not in terms of reorganization, but in terms of "issues." Which means lots of meetings and papers on problems that transcend agency boundries, such as protection against natural calamities, support for basic academic research, and international transfer of advanced technology. The pace is furious, the hours are crushing, and the ultimate effect is slight, if any — but that's the way Washington works.

In Congress, the year has seen the arrival of a new and influential subcommittee concerned with R&D, Science, Technology, and Space, chaired by Senator Adlai Stevenson (D-Ill). Created by last year's committee reorganization, which set up a Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee to draw together a lot of previously scattered functions, the subcommittee has adopted a generous view of its authority and has gone into all sorts of matters, ranging from the OSTP reorganization — which Stevenson harshly criticized — to microwave hazards and government regulation of recombinant DNA research. Though a newcomer to research issues, and far from sure-footed on scientific and technical matters, Stevenson is taking the subcommittee assignment seriously. He has assembled an able staff and works closely with it.

In the House, the Science and Technology Committee is somewhat in disarray. Its chairman, Olin Teague (D-Texas), is in poor health, and it's not certain whether he will run for office again. Also, staff morale is a bit low, following Teague's appointment of retired Rep. Charles A. Mosher (R-Ohio) as staff director. Mosher is a nice old guy, but during his many years with the committee he did not compile a record as a keen legislator on R&D matters. And, at age 71, he's not likely to blossom on that subject.

On health-related issues and NSF, the pre-eminent Senate figure is Edward Kennedy, who, regardless of how one feels about assorted aspects of his private past, is unmatched for diligence when it comes to looking after his senatorial duties. Throughout the past session, Kennedy performed as a friendly but stern guardian of NSF, shielding it against a variety of kooky assaults, while pressing hard to encourage NSF to de-mystify science for the general population through a Science for Citizens program and other means. Kennedy has also been urging the Foundation to expand its relations with industry, but that gambit has run into serious opposition in the House.

Kennedy and NSF Director Atkinson get on well. But with Atkinson determined to emphasize NSF's traditional role as the central agency for supporting basic research, there could be some friction between the two. Kennedy likes basic research, too, but in his dealings with NIH and NSF, he frequently expresses impatience about getting a utilitarian payoff from government-supported research.

Looking to the next session of Congress, there's some question as to how much time Kennedy will have to devote to NSF matters. Some 40 items of health-related legislation are on the agenda because of expirations that will come next year. In addition, the Administration says it will propose extensive revisions in pharmaceutical drug legislation. And then, of course, that eternal issue, National Health Insurance, is due to come up again.

All in all, it hasn't been a bad year for science. A bit more money is almost certain to come along in the budget that Carter is now preparing. There won't be enough to satisfy all the claimants, but the indications are that science spending will be kept a step or two ahead of the inflation rate, which means that it will fare better than most.

But perhaps most important of all, the healing

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DNA Control, French Style: A Bit Confused

European Report

Paris. While the US government marks time on legislation to regulate recombinant DNA research (SGR Vol. VII, Nos. 17, 18), the situation in France is characteristically both more confused and immobilized as the judicial system and the scientific community struggle for influence over the issue.

Though the scientists were the first to assert their interest, through an Ethics Commission, established in January 1975 and chaired by a well-known medical professor, Jean Bernard, the lawyers will command the next round of public discussions. Due for release any day now is the report of a working group of civil servants, chaired by M. Poignant, a member of the French high court. The working group's involvement with the complexities of recombinant DNA research reflects a feeling that previous efforts were excessively dominated by scientists and produced self-serving results. Furthermore, there was concern that the regulations adopted by the scientists were unaccompanied by any means of legal enforcement.

The Ethics Commission, which has been meeting twice a year on a voluntary, private basis, took as its first task the implementation of guidelines that are intended to make up for the lack of legislation. Though its status is unofficial, it conceives one of its main roles to be the determining of responsibility in the event of an "incident" — which, fortunately, has not yet occurred.

The Commission derives whatever authority it possesses through its association with a so-called convention, which is a kind of statement of understanding written by the Delegation Generale a la Recherche Scientifique, a government agency that bears some resemblance to the White House science office. All biological research organizations were supposed to sign this document to show their goodwill.

Most laboratories have, in fact, signed it. But the Atomic Energy Commission and the National Institute for Medical Research didn't, apparently because they were miffed at having been excluded from the drafting procedure. Therefore, the guidelines have limited value, in terms of scope of coverage; furthermore, they are voluntary and optional, and, under French law, have very little value.

The main objective of the convention is to encourage laboratories to submit their experiments to a Control Commission. Created at about the same time as the ethics body, the Control Commission is composed of scientists and technicians actively engaged in research. One-fourth of its members are engaged in genetics research, and the rest are biologists from other fields. The Control Commission has met monthly for almost two years, and has examined over 60 projects. Its work, however, has evoked considerable controversy.

From the beginning, the legitimacy of both the Ethics and Control commissions has been challenged by scientific unions.

One of the unions, the CFDT, noted for its opposition to France's nuclear programs, didn't like anything about the membership, organization, or thrust of the dual commission approach; another, the SNES, mainly composed of teachers and researchers, contested only the absence of union representation. The protests haven't as yet drawn any official response, but it now seems likely that the Control Commission will agree to accept members elected by research organizations, rather than designated by the unions.

Research with Recombinant DNA (295 pages), proceedings from a wide-ranging forum held last spring by the National Academy of Sciences, is available for $8.50 per copy from the National Academy of Sciences, Printing and Publishing Office, 2101 Constitution Ave. NW., Washington, DC 20418.

The Control Commission has tended toward the development of progressively elaborated standards, starting with guidelines originating in the United States. (Many of the Commission members had attended the Asilomar Conference, and used those proceedings as their starting point). The guidelines adopted by the US National Institutes of Health were quickly adopted, which involved little difficulty, since experiments forbidden in the US were not being conducted or planned in France.

On the basis of its experience, the Control Commission is ready to publish its own standards. These are mainly derived from the NIH guidelines, with the addition of two important elements.

First, the Commission recommended specific levels of training in laboratory procedures and security for research personnel. It also proposed that a training course be established in a central French laboratory or under the auspices of the European Molecular Biology Organization.

Secondly, the ecological risk concept was introduced.

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process that began under Ford has been carefully continued under Carter. The Administration values research, and wants to be good to it. Looking back just a few years, that's quite an improvement. —DSG

Science Board, NIH Close Ranks on Recombinant Controls

Having confused Congress to the point where it backed off from what looked like certain passage of legislation to regulate recombinant DNA research, the elders of the scientific community have lately been closing ranks around the notion that the regulatory task is in good hands at the National Institutes of Health. The most recent chorus on this theme comes from the National Science Board, the policy-making body of the National Science Foundation, which adopted the following resolution at its November 17 meeting:

"The National Science Board unanimously requested that the Director of the National Science Foundation convey to the Director of the National Institutes of Health its endorsement of the process used to update the guidelines for the conduct of recombinant DNA research. The original guidelines were developed on the basis of scientific information available approximately two years ago. The proposed revisions have been developed on the basis of new information accumulated during the intervening period, in particular, those concerning the biology of organisms containing recombinant DNA molecules and the effectiveness of biological and physical containment. Reassessment will undoubtedly be needed again in the future as new knowledge becomes available, as cited in the earlier resolution of the Board.

"The Board also endorses the activity carried out by the National Institutes of Health in widely publicizing the proposed revisions in such a way as to insure full participation of scientific, industrial, agricultural, environmental, and other concerned public groups in the process.

"The National Science Board looks forward to continuing cooperation with the National Institutes of Health in this area of mutual concern."

DNA

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The Commission noted that attention must be given not only to the hazards of human infection, but also to dangers to animal and plant populations.

However, even before the details of the Commission's recommendations are available, their validity has been contested, and there is a possibility that the report may be delayed and, perhaps, never published.

French biologists have closely followed the US decision to set aside legislative action on the basis of recent findings that suggest that the hazards of recombinant DNA research are not as great as was originally feared. There is no desire for France to adopt standards stricter than those in the US.

In addition, many researchers feel that the expense of high-security laboratories is unnecessary, that proper training can assure safety. And many DNA researchers have wearied of the publicity and moralism that has been directed at them in recent years. They note that biologists working on cancer and viruses seem to have escaped the barrage, while they are the targets of what they consider unfair and often irrational attacks.

The difference is not due only to the dramatic aspects of DNA research. Medical and biological research in France exist in a kind of legal vacuum, and it was the misfortune of genetics research to become an issue that highlighted this fact.

In response to this, the Secretary of State for Scientific Research, M. Sourdille, who is a physician, has called for a judicial study of the problem. As such things work in France, the task will be assigned to a group of civil servants; Parliament will have no role in examining the issues, and the scientific community will have little, if any opportunity, to make its views known.

It appears likely, then, that a serious public debate must await some disaster.—FS

Medical Enrollment Hits Peak

Federal health planners are looking with apprehension at one of the great success stories of government policymaking — the deliberate expansion of medical training to the point where enrollments reached a record peak of 60,039 this year.

The figure, which is almost exactly double the 1960 enrollment, is a direct consequence of legislation that helped bring the present number of medical schools from 86 in that year to 120.

Since it looks inhumane to argue against producing more doctors, Congress has long been a powerful proponent of more. But with health-cost containment now the central issue in health policymaking, the profusion of enrollees — equivalent to about one-sixth of all the physicians now in practice in this country — is a source of great concern.

The reason, quite simply, is that doctors always manage to be busy and well paid, thougn often — as the HEW planners see — by providing services that are of questionable necessity. With all that doctor-power coming to market, HEW fears, efforts to hold down the nation's medical bills will be sorely tried.

TV Forum Airs Appeals for Boost in R&D

A common view among many of the statesmen of science is that the federal government should provide their profession with more money and less interference.

Since this is by no means a recipe perculiar to science, it normally receives little attention in the general news media. An exception, however, occurred November 30, when closely following on President Carter's assurance of a boost in funds for research (SGR Vol. VII, No. 20), the nationally televised MacNeil-Lehrer Report assembled a panel of prominent research leaders, and sympathetically questioned them about support for science. The program is carried by 231 public television stations.

Participating were Richard Atkinson, director of the National Science Foundation; Jerome Wiesner, president of MIT; William Hittinger, vice president for research and engineering, RCA, and William O. Baker, president of Bell Labs.

Following are some key excerpts from the discussion:

Lehrer: . . . Doctor, has there been a significant drop in basic research in this country?

Atkinson: . . . Let me try to give you an answer in terms of expenditures, and let me take a time period roughly from 1966 to 1975. In that time, that 10-year period, the federal expenditures for basic research have dropped about 15 per cent. If one looks at developmental and applied work, then there's been about a 20 per cent drop in federal expenditures . . . If one looks at industry, again our figures indicate that over that same 10-year period, there's been a really dramatic drop in industry's support of basic research — about an 18 per cent drop. But in a certain sense, that's somewhat offset by the fact that in industry, there's also been real growth in the developmental phase of activity.

Lehrer: . . . Is it a serious matter? . . . a lot of things decline. Is this anything to be concerned about?

Atkinson: I think it's a very serious matter, Jim. We're looking at trends here. We've got to keep that in mind. What I think has been clearly established in the last 15 years is that research and development is really the key, the major factor in economic progress. One can talk about the last 20 years and cite statistics like 40 to 50 per cent of growth in the gross national product as being directly related to developments in the research and development sector.

Lehrer: Well, you know, someone suggested, doctor, that this dropoff is a natural thing. After all, the post-Sputnik period . . . was an unreal period because so much emphasis was made, and this is just a natural correction. . .

Atkinson: Jim, that may be true. I mean, one never knows quite what exact level one should be targeted at . . . but the trend has now dropped at such an accelerated rate that I think everyone has to worry about the future. If one compares, for example, the United States in terms of the percentage of its gross national product that it commits to research and development, that's been a figure that was around three per cent in 1968, and it's dropped to two per cent in the current year. In contrast, if one looks at West Germany or Japan, or the Soviets, that curve has been an accelerating one. There's no exact figure here, but I think the trends are alarming, and they're the sort of trends where the implications aren't going to show up for a good way down the road. . .

MacNeil: Dr. Wiesner, how serious is the research problem from your perspective?

Wiesner: Well, I think it's very serious, not only in situations like ours, but in most of the universities in the country that do a good deal of research. In fact, it's much more serious in the smaller institutions than the big ones. But it's not primarily the level of expenditures, although the stagnant level has generated many problems. There are more serious problems which have to do with the way our government manages its research and development. We have short-term funding where we used to have longer-term funding, and fragmentation of grants so that faculty researchers spend all of their time writing proposals and seeking money on much smaller than critical-sized activities. That, I think, is more serious than the absolute level [of funding].

MacNeil: Does that mean that they are not only distracted by the . . . bureaucratic aspect of the business in getting grants, but that they're . . . channeled into areas where they wouldn't be . . . if they could choose?

Wiesner: Well, to some degree that's a problem . . . We're finding pressures that drive us more to applied things rather than the basic research, whereas the ideal situation is that the universities do the exploratory, basic research and industry . . . carries the ball on the applied things.

The small grants and fragmentation also keeps us from building up strong research teams. You can't make commitments to people [when] we don't know at the end of a year whether we're going to have money for the next year . . . we have gone to fewer agencies funding research. The Defense Department used to be an important sponsor of basic research, and it did it in a block-grant mode . . . The block grant has disappeared. NSF has had to pick up a very large part of the research activities that were spread around, so that we have less diversity than we used to have . . .

MacNeil: Dr. Baker, in Bell Labs, how do you see the research problem?

Baker: . . . we think it is advancing strongly . . . that

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Federal Aid for Industrial R&D Under Study

Since Jimmy Carter very rarely speaks publicly on federal relations with science, we must make do with the public utterances of his science adviser, Frank Press, on the assumption that Press both echoes and influences his boss's thinking.

So, from perusing two recent speeches by Press, November 29 at the University of Houston's 50th anniversary, and December 7, at an IBM interdivisional symposium, in Washington, we select the following as worthy of note:

• **Industrial R&D:** The Administration is "planning a broad study of the health of industrial R&D. We would hope that such a study — a Cabinet-level analysis of the situation — might lead to new federal policy that will increase industry's investment in R&D that would in turn provide new innovations and growth."

"There has long been evidence that the production of low-technology products has been shifting to developing countries. This is now becoming true of some high-technology, and it is showing in the economic growth of the industrial nations. We badly need some quantum leaps in innovation to allow the developing countries to continue their growth while stimulating new growth here and in the other advanced nations. . ."

"I think we can expect to see much thought and action going into ways to stimulate" industrial R&D. "My office will be coordinating a federal research program on this which I believe will have strong Administration support. The Department of Commerce will be the lead agency in this program, which, among other things, will examine the link between industrial R&D and innovation, assess the direct and indirect impact of various government policies on this, and try to identify changes that might be made in government policy that would lead to more economically and socially beneficial innovation through increased industrial R&D.

"On the basis of the findings of such a study, we would hope to make recommendations to the President that he might use to carry out needed changes. These could involve such matters as regulation, tax policy, antitrust constraints, patent policy, government procurement and investment, and the encouragement of new industry-university relationships. . ."

"I have met with a number of industry officials to listen to their problems, and, while I am sympathetic with much of what they have to say, I am left with the feeling that they are overly negative and defensive. I would hope that while we are at work figuring out what government can do to improve the situation, industry will do some hard thinking on the matter and come up with some positive new ideas and programs also."

• **Money for R&D:** There will be more, Carter indicated on November 22, when he presented the National Medal of Science (SGR Vol. VII, No. 20). But the President didn't say how much more, nor did Press in his two speeches. What is significant, however, is that as next year's budget plans near completion, Press is sounding more and more cautious on the subject of money. Thus, in his November 29 speech, he said, "At this point, let me stress that this Administration is generally in favor of increasing the federal support of basic research across the board. Just last week . . . the President spoke of his personal interest in seeing that the basic sciences receive better funding to reverse some of the trends that indicate a weakening of their strength . . . I am encouraged by the resulting actions and attitudes. I believe they will be reflected in the forthcoming federal budget for R&D activities, together with the President's commitment."

On December 7th, however, Press toned down his optimism a bit. "One focus of the budget change," he said, "will be basic research," adding that "We can perhaps reverse the negative trends by supporting research above the level of inflation, by beginning to replace obsolete facilities, and by providing more opportunity for young scientists. But this will not necessarily produce an R&D renaissance nor economic miracles. We should continue to expect tight budgeting throughout the government, with R&D competing with many other needs and subject to strict accountability. This will remain the general climate in which we will have to operate, even while the short-term forecasts look better."

PANEL

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very able people and ample resources are going into the total national R&D — it is, in fact, totally a new high in 1977 in terms of real dollars. But we fear very much the emergence of stresses of the kinds that have already been noted. They are essentially limitations on the quality of science and technology. It's a matter of requiring special environs, circumstances of freedom, encouragement for new ventures. And the size of the community that's involved is very critical. We must have large groups.

. . . I think that we have to watch the stresses of regulation, of the containment of innovation by policies of government, by perhaps a failure of us all to convince society and our political leadership that industrial research and development require cooperation among industries, require revisions of anti-trust policies.

Carter Aide Cautions on Anti-Smoking Drive

There's gloom in the anti-tobacco camp these days, and it's traceable to two sources: The Administration's adamant refusal to end price supports for tobacco producers and a speech that Peter Bourne, the President's Special Assistant for Health Issues, delivered November 10 to the American Cancer Society's Ad Hoc Committee on Tobacco and Smoking Research.

The tobacco price-support issue is a straightforward matter of politics and votes. Several hundred thousand tobacco farmers benefit from the price supports; their wellbeing and good will are carefully attended to by Members of Congress; Carter needs all the Congressional support he can muster, and therefore he is not going to clash with them.

The Bourne speech, however, is a puzzler. Though acknowledging the hazards of tobacco, it reads like a debating exercise aimed at mustering every argument, reasonable and far fetched, as to why the government can't do much about it.

"No matter how much we may favor prohibition of tobacco products," Bourne said, "we are 300 years too late," which is true but irrelevant to the argument that the hazards and counsel on kicking the habit should receive stronger emphasis.

Research is needed, Bourne continued, but "There should be no automatic assumptions in such research that there are no beneficial effects of tobacco use." No doubt there are, but the growing lung cancer epidemic would seem to wash out whatever favorable points can be ascribed to the weed.

Bourne also assailed attempts to prohibit smoking in public places, contending that "Researcn regarding the effects of smoking in confined areas should not automatically begin with the answer that smoking should be prohibited. It is essential that the strategy be one that will work and is acceptable to the American people. Better ventilation may provide a better and easier answer in some cases."

To which he added that "our experience with other addictions suggests that federally funded 'I Quit' programs may be too costly and the diversion of already too scarce federal research funds may cost us lives as well as dollars. These programs may best be left up to private citizens groups . . . I am not sure," he continued, "that we can yet demonstrate that programs designed to scare young people out of smoking are cost-effective. . . . By turning to compulsion and seeking to affect smoking habits by indirection and inconvenience, we may present the public with our most selfish and, therefore, our least valid virtue: our own annoyance at the odor of cigarette smoke."

And then, with a final blast of non-sequitors, Bourne said, "To me, the soundest programs will aim at the problems of the smoking rather than the non-smoking populations; at problems presented by an existing 300-year-old agriculturally based domestic industry; at the reduction of cancer and other health problems rather than at punishment. This Administration is strongly committed to addressing this problem. (HEW) Secretary (Joseph) Califano has taken a deep personal interest in this issue and is giving it the kind of priority that is essential if we are to significantly reduce the depressing toll that cancer takes on the American people every year."

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